

"As a student I helped to launch the Student Associate grade of the Royal College of Psychiatrists."

Dr Jude Harrison is a Clinical Academic Training Fellow in Psychiatry based in Wales. As well as training to become a consultant psychiatrist, she also undertakes academic research in the field of Alzheimer's disease. The academic medicine route includes dedicated time to pursue research alongside clinical work.

Dr Jude Harrison

Clinical academic training fellow

Employer or university

University Hospital of Wales

Portrait of Dr Jude Harrison

How I got into the role

Expand / collapse

My interest in academic medicine started at medical school. At the end of my third year I used my summer vacation to undertake an eight-week Wellcome Trust Summer Studentship, where I participated in research into the relationship between Alzheimer's disease and diabetes.

I enjoyed the psychiatry training at medical school and became involved with student activities at the Royal College of Psychiatry. With the support of enthusiastic peer mentors, I decided that psychiatry was the career for me. Mental health problems are highly prevalent and the effects on those who suffer are enormous. I chose psychiatry as I want to contribute to a better understanding which will ultimately make a huge

difference to society.

After my first year of foundation training ^[1] as a doctor (F1) I moved to an academic foundation post for my F2 year. The academic foundation post includes a four month block period for research. Following completion of F2 I moved to the Maudsley Hospital rotation in Camberwell, London to commence core training in psychiatry (CT1-3), which lasts three years.

At the end of CT2 I moved to Cardiff for an Academic Training Fellowship, which enabled me to complete my CT3 year and also undertake research into Alzheimer's disease. I chose Wales as Cardiff University as it has an excellent reputation for research into Alzheimer's and also has the latest neuro-imaging equipment.

What I do

Expand / collapse

The final year of my core psychiatry training (CT3) has involved an 80/20 split between clinical and academic work and has enabled me to formulate research ideas for my forthcoming PhD. Academic training in medicine involves time out from training for three years to complete a PhD, during which you are paid your normal salary.

I am applying to the Wellcome Trust, the Medical Research Council, Alzheimer's Research UK and the Alzheimer's Society for funding, with the help of my supervisor and others in the research team.

The clinical aspect of my job occupies about four days each week. My first post here was with the Home Treatment Team, which offers an alternative to hospital admission for those with serious mental health problems. Working as part of a team that includes nurses and healthcare assistants I assessed patients and worked with them to devise treatment plans, which included medication, psychotherapy and social support.

I am currently working with the Older Adults Liaison Psychiatry service at the University Hospital of Wales. Here I treat patients with delirium, dementia and severe depression. They often have multiple and severe physical and mental health problems.

The best bits and challenges

Expand / collapse

I've really enjoyed helping to promote psychiatry as a career to students and trainees. As a student I helped to launch the Student Associate grade of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I also initiated a student psychiatry society at Dundee University, and helped the Royal College of Psychiatrists to develop a national network of student societies. Whilst working on the Maudsley Hospital rotation I was vice-chair of the Maudsley Trainees' Teaching Scheme. This was an organisational role but also included some teaching, and was very enjoyable.

In psychiatry you generally have longer with patients than in other areas of medicine. New patient assessments are given an hour. I love having this extra time, as it also gives me the chance to work with patients and their families and listen to their concerns.

I enjoy academic psychiatry, as I can look for the answers to the questions that my patients ask. My clinical experience can drive my research questions and research makes me a better clinician. I can also keep up to date with current literature and attend conferences.

Psychiatry can be stressful, as you are helping people to deal with very powerful emotions. Each week we have a one hour session with our supervisor, when we can talk through particular situations and cases we have dealt with. We also have training in psychotherapy, which enables us to help people with emotional difficulties.

Time management is my main challenge as I have several competing roles to balance – deadlines for academic work, clinical responsibilities towards my patients and colleagues and various leadership roles. I am currently Vice Chair of the Academy of Royal Colleges Trainees Doctors group. Research sometimes spreads into evenings and weekends, but I don't mind as the subject is fascinating and it doesn't really feel like work.

Life outside work

Expand / collapse

I enjoy long cycle rides and walks with friends in the beautiful Welsh countryside and find these to be good ways to unwind from work.

Career plans and top tips for others

Expand / collapse

Successfully completing my PhD is my next career challenge. After that I return to dual higher specialist training in Old Age and General Adult psychiatry, ST4-7. This will only take me three years rather than the usual four as I applied to for my PhD to count towards my training time. However, I would like to take some more time out of my training to do a post-doctoral research fellowship.

Top tips

- be proactive – knock on doors and talk to people about their work and research
- attend conferences and use as an opportunity for networking
- participate in student and trainee activities of your chosen royal college
- make friends with some people a few years ahead of you who can act as near-peer mentors and help you along your path

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/psychiatry/liaison-psychiatry/real-life-story-dr-jude-harrison>

Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training